

Elmer Holmes Davis Papers

A Finding Aid to the Collection in the Library of Congress

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Manuscript Division, Library of
Congress

Washington, D.C.

2012

Contact information: <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/mss.contact>

Finding aid encoded by Library of
Congress Manuscript Division, 2012

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Collection Summary

Title: Elmer Holmes Davis Papers

Span Dates: 1865-1957

Bulk Dates: (bulk 1946-1955)

ID No.: MSS17889

Creator: Davis, Elmer Holmes, 1890-1958

Extent: 7,800 items; 25 containers; 10 linear feet

Language: Collection material in English

Repository: Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Abstract: Author, journalist, news analyst, and government official. Correspondence, manuscripts of articles and early pieces of fiction, subject file, radio scripts, biographical material, lectures and speeches, and photographs relating to Davis's career.

Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library's online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

People

Davis, Elmer Holmes, 1890-1958.

Davis, Elmer Holmes, 1890-1958. But We Were Born Free. 1954.

De Voto, Bernard Augustine, 1897-1955--Correspondence.

Murrow, Edward R.--Correspondence.

Ross, Harold Wallace, 1892-1951--Correspondence.

Thurber, James, 1894-1961--Correspondence.

Truman, Harry S., 1884-1972--Correspondence.

Van Loon, Hendrik Willem, 1882-1944--Correspondence.

Welles, Sumner, 1892-1961--Correspondence.

White, William Allen, 1868-1944--Correspondence.

Wilson, Carolyn A., d. 1960--Correspondence.

Organizations

American Broadcasting Company.

Columbia Broadcasting System, inc.

United States. Office of War Information.

Subjects

Journalism.

Literature--20th century.

World politics.

World War, 1914-1918--France.

World War, 1939-1945--Propaganda.

Places

United States--Politics and government--20th century.

Occupations

Authors.

Journalists.

News analysts.

Public officials.

Administrative Information

Provenance

The papers of Elmer Holmes Davis, author, journalist, news analyst, and government official, were given to the Library of Congress by Davis and his widow, Florence MacMillan Davis, in 1954 and 1959. A letter was given by William R. Allen in 1962 and a radio script by Reid and Nancy Campbell Joyner in 2011.

Processing History

The papers of Elmer Holmes Davis were arranged and described circa 1960. The 1953 letter given by William R. Allen was interfiled into the collection in 1962. The finding aid was revised in 2004. The collection was expanded and the finding aid revised in 2012.

Additional Guides

A note on the Elmer Holmes Davis Papers appeared in the Library's *Information Bulletin* 18, no. 20 (May 18, 1959): 269-70. A brief description of the papers also appeared in the Library's *Quarterly Journal of Current Acquisitions* 17, no. 3 (May 1960): 185.

Copyright Status

Copyright in the unpublished writings of Elmer Holmes Davis in these papers and in other collections of papers in the custody of the Library of Congress has been dedicated to the public.

Access and Restrictions

The papers of Elmer Holmes Davis are open to research. Researchers are advised to contact the Manuscript Reading Room prior to visiting. Many collections are stored off-site and advance notice is needed to retrieve these items for research use.

Preferred Citation

Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: Container number, Elmer Holmes Davis Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Biographical Note

<i>Date</i>	<i>Event</i>
1890, Jan. 13	Born, Aurora, Ind.
1910-1911	A.B. and A.M., Franklin College, Franklin, Ind.
1912-1914	Rhodes Scholar, Queen's College, Oxford University, Oxford, England
1914-1924	Worked on staff of <i>New York Times</i>
1917	Married Florence MacMillan
1920-1935	Created and wrote for the character Godfrey G. Gloom, who was a columnist and political commentator
1939-1942	News analyst, Columbia Broadcasting Co.
1942-1945	Director, Office of War Information

1945-1954	Free-lance writer, radio commentator, and lecturer
1954	Published <i>But We Were Born Free</i> . Garden City, New York: Garden City Books
1955	Published <i>Two Minutes Till Midnight</i> , a sequel to <i>But We Were Born Free</i> . Indianapolis, Indiana: Bobbs-Merrill
1958, May 18	Died, Washington, D. C.

Scope and Content Note

The papers of Elmer Holmes Davis (1890-1958) span the years 1865-1957, with the bulk of the material dating from 1946 to 1955. The papers are organized into the following series: [General Correspondence](#), [Personal and Literary File](#), [Subject File](#), [Radio Scripts](#), and [Addition](#).

The [General Correspondence](#) contains mostly letters relating to Davis's career. He kept little of his personal incoming and outgoing letters. Davis did, however, retain some early correspondence written by his parents, his wife, and a few others. Notable are the 1917 letters from Carolyn A. Wilson who reported from France during World War I for the *Chicago Tribune* and corresponded with Davis about what she observed. Later correspondence reflects Davis's involvement in the political and literary fields. Correspondents include Bernard Augustine De Voto, Edward R. Murrow, Harold Wallace Ross, James Thurber, Harry S. Truman, Hendrik Willem van Loon, Sumner Welles, and William Allen White.

The [Personal and Literary File](#) contains biographical material, lectures and speeches, photographs, and printed copies of many of Davis's articles and early pieces of fiction as well as the typescript of *But We Were Born Free*. Of interest are photographs taken during a visit to Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, in 1944, and currency produced by the First National Bank of Aurora, Illinois, in 1865, where Davis's father worked.

The [Subject File](#), devoted mainly to world events, contains correspondence, newspaper clippings, magazine articles, government publications, notes, and press releases issued by news bureaus and government agencies. Of interest are the files on the Office of War Information that include a report to the president for the years 1942-1945 and items relating to Davis's service as director including his file card from the Nazi Propaganda Ministry, memoranda of conversations with government officials, and correspondence and clippings relating to the dispute between the Office of War Information and its overseas branch. Further correspondence relating to the Office of War Information is in the General Correspondence.

[Radio Scripts](#) contains Davis's original scripts of broadcasts for the Columbia Broadcasting System and the American Broadcasting Company. For 1946, there is also a set of approved scripts. The [Addition](#) is comprised of a radio script dated 16 February 1942.

Arrangement of the Papers

This collection is arranged in five series:

- [General Correspondence, 1893-1957](#)
- [Personal and Literary File, 1865-1955](#)
- [Subject File, circa 1941-circa 1955](#)
- [Radio Scripts, 1942-1955](#)
- [Addition, 1942](#)

Description of Series

<i>Container</i>	<i>Series</i>
BOX 1-3	<u>General Correspondence, 1893-1957</u> Letters sent and received. Arranged chronologically.
BOX 4-5	<u>Personal and Literary File, 1865-1955</u> Biographical and family material, clippings, speeches and lectures, memorabilia, photographs, articles, typescript of his book <i>But We Were Born Free</i> , booklets, a novel, and short stories. Arranged under personal or literary and therein by type of material.
BOX 6-12	<u>Subject File, circa 1941-circa 1955</u> Correspondence, clippings, congressional reports, notes, press releases, printed matter, research papers, and other material. Arranged alphabetically by topic.
BOX 13-25	<u>Radio Scripts, 1942-1955</u> Original radio scripts. Arranged chronologically.
BOX 25	<u>Addition, 1942</u> Radio script.

Container List

<i>Container</i>	<i>Contents</i>
BOX 1-3	General Correspondence, 1893-1957 Letters sent and received. Arranged chronologically.
BOX 1	1893, 1906-1946 (7 folders)
BOX 2	1947-1949 (4 folders)
BOX 3	1950-1957, undated (6 folders)
BOX 4-5	Personal and Literary File, 1865-1955 Biographical and family material, clippings, speeches and lectures, memorabilia, photographs, articles, typescript of his book <i>But We Were Born Free</i> , booklets, a novel, and short stories. Arranged under personal or literary and therein by type of material.
BOX 4	Personal
BOX 4	Biographical and family material
BOX 4	Clippings, 1903, 1911-1912, 1941-1953
BOX 4	Currency and documents relating to Elam Holmes Davis (father), 1865, 1873, 1888, 1896, 1912-1913
BOX 4	Memorabilia, 1910, 1920-1921, 1934-1950, undated
BOX 4	Photographs, 1944, undated
BOX 4	Miscellaneous clippings, 1925, 1934-1935, 1941-1954
BOX 4	Printed matter, 1943-1953, undated
BOX 4	Speeches and lectures, 1940, 1946-1953, undated (2 folders)
BOX 4	Transcripts from the British Broadcasting Company and the Columbia Broadcasting System, 1948-1949
BOX 4	Literary
BOX 4	Articles and book reviews
BOX 4	1915-1929 (2 folders)
BOX 5	1930-1955 (3 folders)
BOX 5	Book, <i>But We Were Born Free</i> , typescript, 1954
BOX 5	Booklets, 1920, 1942
BOX 5	Novel, "He Drives Furiously," undated

Personal and Literary File, 1865-1955

<i>Container</i>	<i>Contents</i>
BOX 5	Short stories, 1921-1938 (4 folders)
BOX 6-12	Subject File, circa 1941-circa 1955 Correspondence, clippings, congressional reports, notes, press releases, printed matter, research papers, and other material. Arranged alphabetically by topic.
BOX 6	Africa-Brownell, Herbert (14 folders)
BOX 7	Campaign information-Democratic party policies (10 folders)
BOX 8	Education-Foreign policy (6 folders)
BOX 9	France-Italy (18 folders)
BOX 10	Japan-Office of War Information (10 folders)
BOX 11	Oil-Republican party policies (16 folders)
BOX 12	Soviet Union-Yugoslavia (13 folders)
BOX 13-25	Radio Scripts, 1942-1955 Original radio scripts. Arranged chronologically.
BOX 13	Mar. 1942, Aug. 1944
BOX 13	Dec. 1945
BOX 13	1946
BOX 13	Original
BOX 13	Jan.-Oct. (4 folders)
BOX 14	Nov.-Dec. (1 folder)
BOX 14	Approved (2 folders)
BOX 14	1947
BOX 14	Jan.-Mar. (5 folders)
BOX 15	Apr.-July (11 folders)
BOX 16	Aug.-Dec. (5 folders)
BOX 16	1948
BOX 16	Jan.-Mar. (3 folders)

Radio Scripts, 1942-1955

<i>Container</i>	<i>Contents</i>
BOX 17	Apr-Dec. (9 folders)
BOX 18	1949
BOX 18	Jan.-July (7 folders)
BOX 19	Aug.-Dec. (5 folders)
BOX 19	1950
BOX 19	Jan.-Mar. (3 folders)
BOX 20	Apr.-Dec. (9 folders)
BOX 21	1951
BOX 21	Jan.-June (6 folders)
BOX 22	July-Dec. (6 folders)
BOX 22	1952
BOX 22	Jan.-Feb.
BOX 23	Mar.-Oct. (4 folders)
BOX 24	Nov.-Dec.
BOX 24	1953
BOX 24	Jan.-May (5 folders)
BOX 25	June-Oct. (5 folders)
BOX 25	1954
BOX 25	1955
BOX 25	Addition, 1942 Radio script.
BOX 25	Radio script, 1942, Feb. 16